

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 COME-00 EB-07 INR-07 LAB-04

NSAE-00 SIL-01 DODE-00 PM-04 H-02 L-03 NSC-05 PA-01

PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 IO-10 OMB-01 TRSE-00

ACDA-05 CIEP-01 EURE-00 /088 W
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P R 191711Z NOV 75

FM AMEMBASSY LONDON

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 6691

INFO AMEMBASSY BONN

AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS

AMEMBASSY COPENHAGEN

AMEMBASSY DUBLIN

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: ELAB, UK

SUBJECT: MODERATES GAIN MAJOR VICTORY IN BRITAIN'S SECOND
LARGEST UNION

REF: LONDON 15517

SUMMARY - MODERATES HAVE WON A SIGNAL VICTORY IN BRITAIN'S
SECOND LARGEST UNION - THE AMALGAMATED UNION OF ENGINEER-
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ING WORKERS' DOMINANT ENGINEERING SECTION - FOLLOWING A

POSTAL TALLY ANNOUNCED YESTERDAY (NOVEMBER 18) - SEE REFTEL. THIS VICTORY HAS NOT ONLY SHIFTED THE BALANCE OF POWER IN THE UNION'S GOVERNING BODY IN FAVOR OF THE MODERATES BUT SHOULD ALSO STRENGTHEN THE MODERATE CAUSE IN THE LARGER FORA OF THE TUC AND THE LABOR PARTY WHERE AUEW BLOC VOTING STRENGTH PLAYS A VERY IMPORTANT ROLE. IT SHOULD ALSO IMPROVE THE CLIMATE IN THE UNION FOR ADHERENCE TO THE GOVERNMENT'S ANTI-INFLATION POLICY. AT THE SAME TIME, IT MEANS THAT THE UNION'S LEFT-WING PRESIDENT, HUGH QCANLON, MAY BECOME INCREASINGLY ISOLATED. END SUMMARY.

1. THE ELECTION ACTUALLY COVERED ABOUT 21 POSTS, INCLUDING VACANT OR TO-BE-VACATED SEATS ON THE EXECUTIVE OF THE ENGINEERING SECTION OF THE UNION WHICH IS OVERWHELMINGLY THE LARGEST AND MOST IMPORTANT SECTION OF THE UNION. IN THE BATTLE FOR THE EXECUTIVE, A LITTLE KNOWN MODERATE, BIRMINGHAM-BASED TERRY DUFFY, DEFEATED A VETERAN LEFT-WINGER, BOB WRIGHT, LONG-TIME MEMBER OF THE EXECUTIVE AND UNION OFFICIAL BY A RESOUNDING VOTE OF 45,469 TO 20,685. ANOTHER MODERATE, GAVIN LAIRD, FROM SCOTLAND, TROUNCED THE VERY WELL KNOWN AND CHARISMATIC COMMUNIST, JIMMY REID BY 24,838 TO 12,114. WRIGHT'S DEFEAT IS MADE MORE SIGNIFICANT BY THE FACT THAT HE WAS CONSIDERED HEIR-APPARENT TO HUGH SCANLON, NOW 62, WHEN THE LATTER RETIRES IN ABOUT 3 YEARS' TIME. (ANOTHER MODERATE, HARRY BANKS, FROM PRESTON, WILL FACE GERRY RUSSELL, ALSO A RELATIVE MODERATE, IN A RUN-OFF CONTEST NEXT MARCH FOR A THIRD SEAT.)

2. SINCE LAIRD WILL TAKE HIS PLACE ON THE UNION'S EXECUTIVE IN DECEMBER OF THIS YEAR, THIS MEANS AN IMMINENT SHIFT OF POWER TO MODERATES OF 4 TO 3. DUFFY WILL NOT JOIN IT UNTIL WRIGHT'S TERM IS COMPLETED IN SEPTEMBER 1976 AT WHICH TIME THE MODERATES SHOULD BOOST THEIR STRENGTH TO A MORE COMFORTABLE 5-2 MARGIN. (THE THIRD SEAT BEING CONTESTED IN THE RUN-OFF WILL NOT BE VACATED UNTIL NOVEMBER 1976, BUT THIS IS NOT EXPECTED TO AFFECT THE LEFT-RIGHT BALANCE.)

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3. IN ANOTHER ELECTION -- FOR ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF THE UNION -- JAMES DOCHERTY, A MODERATE, NOSED OUT KEN BRETT, A COMMUNIST, BUT THERE WILL BE A RECOUNT HELD TO DETERMINE THE FINAL RESULT. MODERATES, IN FACT, LED IN 18 OF THE 21 SEATS BEING CONTESTED, INCLUDING THOSE FOR THE EXECUTIVE AND OTHER POSTS AROUND THE COUNTRY.

4. PARTICIPATION IN THE POSTAL BALLOTING RANGED AS HIGH

AS 40 PERCENT, IN CONTRAST TO THE LOW TURNOUT THAT USED TO CHARACTERIZE BRANCH ELECTIONS. MODERATES STRONGLY SUPPORTED POSTAL BALLOTS ON THE GROUNDS THAT BRANCH VOTING TENDED TO FAVOR THE LEFT-WING WHOSE PARTICIPATION WAS USUALLY VERY HIGH. LEFT-WINGERS HAVE CONTINUOUSLY TRIED TO DO AWAY WITH POSTAL BALLOTS IN THE UNION AND HAVE FAILED. NOW, WITH A MODERATE MAJORITY IN CONTROL, THE POSTAL BALLOT WILL UNDOUBTEDLY REMAIN.

5. COMMENT: IT WAS INDEED A VERY IMPORTANT VICTORY IN MANY WAYS. IT CONTINUES THE TREND OF SUCCESS FOR THE MODERATES EXEMPLIFIED BY THE VICTORY OF JOHN BOYD WHEN HE

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BECAME THE UNION'S GENERAL SECRETARY. IT COULD MEAN THAT THE UNION WILL SHIFT ITS FORMIDABLE WEIGHT AT TUC CONFERENCES AND AT THE LABOR PARTY CONFERENCE WHERE IT CONTROLS A LARGE BLOC VOTE TO HELP STEM THE LEFTWARD DRIFT IN THE LABOR MOVEMENT AS A WHOLE. ONE USES THE WORD "COULD" IN THIS REGARD BECAUSE THE PROOF WILL COME IN THE TESTING. THE AUEW IS IN EFFECT A LARGE, UNWIELDY LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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FEDERATION OF UNIONS, AND THE SHIFT TO THE MODERATES MAY BE DUE AS MUCH TO THE MAL-ADMINISTRATION OF THE UNION UNDER THE PRESENT LEADERSHIP OF HUGH SCANLON AS TO A CHANGE IN THE POLITICAL CLIMATE IN THE COUNTRY, I.E., A MORE SOBER AWARENESS OF THE NATION'S NEEDS IN THE FACE OF ITS MOST SERIOUS ECONOMIC CRISIS SINCE THE DEPRESSION. (WE ARE POUCHING AN EXCELLENT ANALYSIS OF THE UNION'S INTERNAL DISARRAY BY JOHN ELLIOTT, IN THE FINANCIAL TIMES "THE ENGINEERING REALLY NEEDED INSIDE THE AUEW.") NONE-THELESS, WHILE THE EUPHORIA EXPRESSED BY SOME LONDON NEWS PAPERS OVER THE AUEW ELECTION RESULTS MAY BE PREMATURE, THEY ARE INDEED HEARTENING, AND IF -- AS HAS OFTEN OCCURRED IN BRITISH TRADE UNION AFFAIRS -- IT AUGURS A GENUINE SWING IN THE PENDULUM THIS WILL BE WELCOMED BY MODERATES EVERYWHERE.

RICHARDSON

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